

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 02150 211202Z

53

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /152 W

----- 104133

R 210957Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9878

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS PRETORIA 2150

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SF, FR

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA REACTION TO FRENCH ELECTIONS

1. PRIME MINISTER VORSTER SAID ON MAY 20 THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD ANXIOUSLY AWAITED RESULTS OF FRENCH ELECTON. ELECTION OF FRENCH PRESIDENT SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNISTS " WOULD HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY DETRIMENTAL TO THE FREE WORLD ON A WIDE SCALE." FRENCH NATION HAD PREVENTED THIS. VORSTER CONGRATULATED M. D'ESTAING AND OFFERED A PRAYER THAT HE WOULD "RECEIVE THE NECESSARY STRENGTH AND GUIDANCE IN THE DIFFICULT TASK FACING HIM AND FRANCE."

2. PRESS REACTION HERE PROBABLY EXPRESSES SENTIMENTS OF MOST SOUTH AFRICANS. TWO NEWSPAPER HEADLINES APTLY SUM UP THAT REACTION: "SOUTH AFRICA RELIEF IN GISCARD VICTORY" (JOHANNESBURG STAR); "GISCARD WINS--AND SA RELAXES" (PRETORIA

3. IN EDITORIAL MAY 21, RAND DAILY MAIL STATED: "SOUTH AFRICA CAN HEAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF THAT THE SOCIALIST CHALLENGE IN FRANCE HAS BEEN DEFEATED AND THAT MR. GISCARD D'ESTAING WILL BE PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT SEVEN YEARS. BY THE NARROWEST
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 02150 211202Z

OF MARGINS WE HAVE BEEN SPARED A CHANGE WHICH WOULD HAVE

CUT OFF THIS COUNTRY'S MAIN SOURCE OF ARMS AND PLUNGED US
DEEPER INTO ISOLATION."

4. HOWEVER, IT HAD BEEN REPORTED HERE THAT DURING ELECTION
CAMPAIGN GISCARD SAID FRANCE WOULD HAVE TO REEXAMINE ITS
POLICIES TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA. THUS, MAIL CAUTIONED THAT
SA WOULD HAVE TO "WAIT ANXIOUSLY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT
HE MAY HAVE TO CHANGE FRANCE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOUTH
AFRICA." THE MAIL OBSERVED, MOREOVER, THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S
"SENSE OF RELIEF SHOULD NOT OBSCURE THE LESSONS TO BE DRAWN
FROM THIS NARROW SHAVE. IT HAS SHOWN WHAT A FLIMSY STATE
OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS ARE IN, THAT SO MUCH NATIONAL INTEREST
SHOULD TURN UPON THE RESULT OF A SINGLE ELECTION."
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